

June 29, 2020

Gorge 2020 Draft Management Plan comments to Gorge Commission:

Dear Columbia River Gorge Commissioners,

1. In regards to the Revision of Urban Area Boundaries, I agree with and support the proposed definition of a minor revision: page 416, #8: limits the revision to cumulatively 20 acres or 1% of the total Urban Area, whichever is less. This is the maximum I would support.

I'm assuming that you are required to define what is a minor revision. Any encroachment into the National Scenic Area is not desirable. Where could this occur where it wouldn't be destroying habitat or resource land, or otherwise conflict with the purposes of the National Scenic Area Act (protecting and enhancing the scenic, cultural, recreational, and natural resources of the Gorge)?

In Section (f) (2) of the National Scenic Area Act, two of the criteria for revision of urban area boundaries are demonstrable need and maximum efficiency of land uses within the urban area. Neither of these has been shown.

In regards to need:

In 2018 a buildable lands inventory for housing was done in the largest of the urban areas, The Dalles. It was determined that there was a surplus of buildable land beyond what was projected to be needed over the next 20 years. Of the 480 acres of buildable land only an estimated 232 acres would be needed in the next 20 years (less than half of the buildable land).

Efficiency of land use hasn't happened in the urban areas. Higher density in the urban areas is needed, not sprawl into the National Scenic Area.

I believe having the National Scenic Area really adds value to these urban areas (increased property values, tourism income, and better quality of life). We need to preserve and protect the natural areas in the gorge, not eliminate them. Once you expand the Urban Area Boundary you can't reverse it later.

2. In regards to Chapter 1, Climate Change: page 380, Part III-Action Plan, GMA Policies, 1: refers to the development and adoption of a Climate Change Action Plan. A 1-year timeline for completion needs to be included. We are running out of time to mitigate climate change.

The Climate Change Plan needs to include:

No loss of wetlands.

Reducing fire risk in the forest lands: by limiting dwellings in forest land and not converting forest land to other uses and losing the carbon sink it provides in the process.

Include adequate 200' stream and river buffers. With rising temperatures, salmon survival is questionable.

Include protection for species such as salmon, western pond turtles, and pika.

Not allow mining, logging and development in pika habitat.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

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